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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

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INFO RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR VDEPIRRO, JTILGHMAN, WHA/AND SLIPPE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/06/2018

TAGS: PREL KCRM ENRG PGOV PTER KJUS EAID

SUBJECT: COLOMBIAN AMB DISCUSSES MASSACRE, CONCERNS ON DOM REP, VENEZUELA

Classified By: AMB FANNIN

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador Fannin received Colombia's new Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Juan Jose Chaux on August 6 for a courtesy call that quickly turned substantive.

Ambassador Chaux's message was that the Dominican Republic must address three key challenges to preserve its democracy: energy, narco-trafficking and governance. Chaux underscored that Colombian President Uribe is concerned about the Dominican Republic because the situation here with respect to drug smuggling, and associated violence and money-laundering, "resembles Colombia in the 1980's." Chaux said his mission includes helping the Dominican Republic reduce dependency on Venezuelan energy supplies and providing Dominican law enforcement with the intelligence and best practices needed to fight the narco-traffickers. He expressed the hope that our two Embassies will work closely together on these issues with the Dominicans. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador Chaux's courtesy call came on a day when the front page news was of seven murders, including the deaths of several Colombians, apparently in a shootout among narco-traffickers carried out August 5. The ambassadors agreed that these gangland-style executions may mark a "new chapter" in the increasingly violent behavior of narco-traffickers and associates in the Dominican Republic. (Note: DEA at Post indicates that narco-traffickers are increasingly paying their collaborators with drugs, raising the probability that drug addiction will increase here, along with associated social, health and criminal problems. End Note.) Chaux said an agreement exists between Colombia and the Dominican Republic on police cooperation. He added that an experienced Colombian police officer is ready to work with our Embassy, and Dominican authorities, to help bring the perpetrators of the "massacre" to justice.

¶3. (C) The Colombians also intend to help the Dominican Republic with energy generation - a critical issue given electricity shortages, high gas prices and a tangled system of subsidies. Ambassador Chaux mentioned bio-diesel and wind power as areas where Colombia has know-how it might share. Moreover, Colombia is working on a plan - not yet made public - to lay an energy transmission line between Colombia and Puerto Rico. Doing so, Chaux said, would deal President Chavez's influence a blow by showing neighboring countries that there are alternatives to going along with PetroCaribe. (Note: PetroCaribe is currently supplying the Dominican Republic with about 25% of its total petroleum consumption on initially generous terms, but the deal will add an unknown amount to the country's external debt over the next several years. End Note.)

¶4. (C) The Dominican government's approach will have to

change, Ambassador Fannin noted, if things are to improve. Fannin then raised the question of whether President Fernandez has the will to leave a positive legacy behind him, given that Fernandez begins his next, and presumably final, term as President on August 16. Ambassador Chaux seemed skeptical that President Fernandez views this as his last term in office, but concurred that the mindset of a country's leadership is critical to making progress.

¶5. (C) Comment: Ambassador Chaux has many years of experience working on democracy, development and the fight against narco-traffickers - given his work in Colombia as a Governor of Cauca Province and as a Senator. The FARC has tried to assassinate him four times. His sincerity in helping the Dominican Republic fight what he termed a "terrible enemy" (narco-traffickers) was palpable. Moreover, as he noted, Colombian President Uribe is worried that if the Dominican Republic does not hit the narco-traffickers hard, the FARC will again receive money to carry on terrorism in Colombia. In Ambassador Chaux, this Embassy appears to have a solid partner for working on three key issues now facing the Dominican Republic: creating energy options, fighting narco-traffickers, and improving governance. End Comment.

FANNIN